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As COVID-19 crisis ebbs, some seeking 9/11-style commission

By JAY REEVES and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN
Associated Press

With more than 600,000 Americans dead of COVID-19 and questions still raging about the origin of the virus and the government's response, a push is underway on Capitol Hill and beyond for a full-blown investigation of the crisis by a national commission like the one that looked into 9/11.

It is unclear whether such a probe will ever happen, though a privately sponsored team of public health experts is already laying the groundwork for one.

Given that most of the disaster unfolded on President Donald Trump's watch, many worry that politics

will get in the way of any inquiry, as happened when Republicans came out against a commission to investigate the Jan. 6 attack on the Capitol by Trump supporters. Others fear that a desire by many to simply move on will thwart a review.

"I think we need to get into the weeds, to look at the details to see what happened," said Sabila Khan of Jersey City, New Jersey, whose father, Shafqat Rasul Khan, died of COVID-19. "If this happens again, our loved ones died in vain."

A bill introduced by Democratic Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey and Republican Sen. Susan Collins of Maine would establish such a commission.

Continued on next page



In this Jan. 7, 2021, file photo, two nurses put a ventilator on a patient in a COVID-19 unit in Orange, Calif.

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Continued from Front

Its inquiry could include a look at the origins of the virus; early warnings and other communication with foreign governments; co-ordination among federal, state and local agencies; the availability of medical supplies; testing and public health surveillance; vaccination development and distribution; the uneven effect on minorities; and government relief policies.

"The death toll from the COVID-19 pandemic is more than 200 times that of the 9/11 attacks — but Congress has yet to establish a similar blue ribbon commission to investigate the vulnerabilities of our public health system and issue guidance for how we as a nation can better protect the American people from future pandemics," Menendez and Collins wrote in an essay this week in The New York Times.

While the government crash program to develop a vaccine proved a success, the crisis in the U.S. was marked by shortages of protective gear and other medical equipment, insufficient testing, defective test kits, false or misleading information about treat-



In this Jan. 7, 2021, file photo, a registered nurse tends to a COVID-19 patient as another puts on her protective gear in Orange, Calif.

ments, and mixed messages on the need for masks and lockdowns. Last month, President Joe Biden ordered U.S. intelligence to step up its efforts to investigate the virus's origins, including the possibility it escaped from a Chinese

laboratory, a once-fringe theory that has gained currency in recent weeks. Many scientists have said they instead believe the virus occurred in nature and jumped from animals to humans. Dr. Naeha Quasba of Baltimore, who lost her

father, Ramash Quasba, to the outbreak, said she favors an investigation that could hold others accountable for their failures, which she said include the lack of a national response plan, inadequate health funding and lackadaisical enforcement of public health orders.

"But at this point, my dad is gone and now a vaccine is available," Quasba said. "So people are moving on to a different phase."

While no vote on the legislation is scheduled and the prospects of passage are uncertain, work already is going on that could help shape an investigation: Members of what is called the COVID Commission Planning Group have been at work for five months, trying to come up with the key questions for a commission and the best ways to get answers. University of Virginia history professor Philip Zelikow, who is leading the planning group and was executive director of the 9/11 Commission, said dozens of experts have been enlisted with the support of charitable foundations and have identified more than 40 lines of inquiry.

"All that preparatory work is being done to be put at the disposal of whatever com-

mission gets created, if it's created by the Congress, created by the president or created independently and privately sponsored," he said.

Established by Congress in late 2002, the 9/11 Commission produced a 567-page report in July 2004 that began with a detailed narrative of the Sept. 11, 2001, hijackings. It went into the causes of terrorists' hatred of the U.S., lapses that helped allow the attacks to occur and suggestions for preventing another one. Many of its suggestions were implemented, including greater intelligence-sharing between agencies. Planning group member Marc Lipsitch, an epidemiology professor and director of the Center for Communicable Disease Dynamics at Harvard's School of Public Health, said one possible alternative to a government-appointed COVID-19 commission would be one that is privately funded.

"The upside is that it could be done in a less politically charged way," Lipsitch said.

Another planning group member, Anita Cicero, deputy director at the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, said the debate over whether to investigate the Capitol attack demonstrated that the partisan divide is the first obstacle to overcome in this case.

"The idea that this should be a commission set up by one party or the other, I think that is sort of dead upon arrival. So you have to find a way that this is a truly more bipartisan and welcome effort," she said. □

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Austin: Al-Qaida could regroup in Afghanistan in 2 years

WASHINGTON (AP) — An extremist group like al-Qaida may be able to regenerate in Afghanistan and pose a threat to the U.S. homeland within two years of the American military's withdrawal from the country, the Pentagon's top leaders said Thursday. It was the most specific public forecast of the prospects for a renewed international terrorist threat from Afghanistan since President Joe Biden announced in April that all U.S. troops would withdraw by Sept. 11.

At a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing, Sen. Lindsey Graham, R-S.C., asked Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and Gen. Mark Milley whether they rated the likelihood of a regeneration of al-Qaida or the Islamic State group in Afghanistan as small, medium or large.

"I would assess it as medium," Austin replied. "I would also say, senator, that it would take possibly two years for them to develop that capability."

Milley, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a veteran of the war in Afghanistan, said he agreed. "I think that if certain other



Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, left, and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley talk before a Senate Appropriations Committee hearing to examine proposed budget estimates and justification for fiscal year 2022 for the Department of Defense in Washington on Thursday, June 17, 2021.

Associated Press

things happen — if there was a collapse of the government or the dissolution of the Afghan security forces — that risk would obviously increase, but right now I would say 'medium' and about two years or so," Milley said.

Their responses underscored the overall military fears about the conse-

quences of a complete, unconditional withdrawal. Military leaders over the past few years have pushed back against administration efforts — including at times by then-President Donald Trump — to pull out of Afghanistan by a certain date, rather than basing troop numbers on the security conditions

on the ground.

Milley also acknowledged that a collapse of the government or takeover by the Taliban could have broader impacts on the strides women have made in Afghanistan. And the military has said it will be far more difficult to collect intelligence on terror groups in the country, if there is no

American presence there. Once the withdrawal is completed, U.S. military and intelligence agencies' ability to monitor and counter extremist groups inside Afghanistan will be limited, but the Pentagon says it will use "over-the-horizon" forces to keep a lid on the threat. The hope is to place surveillance aircraft and other assets in one or more neighboring countries, but no such arrangements have yet been made. That means the counterterrorism effort will have to be conducted from bases farther away, in the Persian Gulf area.

A related concern is that the Taliban, which are seeking greater political leverage in Kabul and could attempt to take power, may retain its associations with al-Qaida, whose presence in Afghanistan was the reason the U.S. invaded in the first place. U.S. officials have questioned whether the Taliban will fulfill a promise made in a February 2020 agreement with the Trump administration to disassociate itself from al-Qaida and to prevent any extremist group from launching attacks on the U.S. from Afghan soil. □

High court backs Nestle, Cargill in child slave labor suit

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Supreme Court on Thursday sided with food giants Nestle and Cargill in a lawsuit that claimed they knowingly bought cocoa beans from farms in Africa that used child slave labor. The justices ruled 8-1 in favor of the food companies and against a group of six adult citizens of Mali that claimed they were taken from their country as children and forced to work on cocoa farms in neighboring Ivory Coast. The justices said an appeals court was wrong to let the group's lawsuit go forward.

"Although respondents' injuries occurred entirely overseas, the Ninth Circuit held that respondents could sue in federal court

because the defendant corporations allegedly made 'major operational decisions' in the United States. The Ninth Circuit erred by allowing this suit to proceed," Justice Clarence Thomas wrote in a majority opinion for the court.

The case had been twice dismissed at an early stage before being revived by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit. When the case was argued in December, then-President Donald Trump's administration backed Nestle and Cargill.

The argument of the group from Mali is that Minneapolis-based Cargill and the American arm of Switzerland-based Nestle "aided and abetted" their slavery

as children by, among other things, buying cocoa beans from farms that used child labor. The group sued seeking to bring a class action lawsuit on behalf of themselves and who they say are thousands of other former child slaves.

Nestle and Cargill have said they have taken steps to combat child slavery and have denied any wrongdoing.

The case involves a law enacted by the very first Congress in 1789, the Alien Tort Statute, which permits foreign citizens to sue in U.S. courts for human rights abuses. The question for the justices was whether it permits lawsuits against American companies.

The high court in recent



In this June 8, 2021 photo, the Supreme Court is seen in Washington.

Associated Press

years has limited the use of the Alien Tort Statute. In 2018, the court ruled that foreign businesses cannot be sued under the law. In that case, the court rejected an attempt by Israeli victims of attacks in

the West Bank and Gaza to use U.S. courts to sue Jordan-based Arab Bank, which they said helped finance the attacks. The case is Nestle USA v. Doe I, 19-416, and Cargill Inc. v. Doe I, 19-453. □

Texas governor: State, crowdsourcing will fund border wall

By ACACIA CORONADO
Report for America/Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — Texas Gov. Greg Abbott said Wednesday that he will use \$250 million in state money and crowdsourced financing to build more barriers along the U.S. border with Mexico, part of an emerging proposal that also extends his political fight over immigration with the Democratic Biden administration. But questions remain over how far Abbott, a Republican, can go for a project whose total cost, length and timeline are unclear and could face legal challenges from the federal government.

Over a dozen Republican members of the Texas House and Senate joined Abbott for a livestreamed press conference announcing his intentions to hire a project manager to continue constructing some version of a wall announced last week, echoing former President Donald Trump's unfinished campaign promise to fortify the southern U.S. border, of which 1,200 miles (1,930 kilometers) is in Texas. Abbott also said he is asking the federal government



Gov. Greg Abbott speaks during a press conference on details of his plan for Texas to build a border wall and provide \$250 million in state funds as a "down payment.", Wednesday, June 16, 2021 in Austin, Texas.

Associated Press

to return land obtained for the U.S. government's wall and return it to private citizens who can allow Texas to finish the job.

"In response to the federal government's neglect of all of the people who live along the border, the people who are facing the consequences of the spread of drugs like fentanyl, Texas is stepping up and doing more than any other state ever has done to re-

spond to these challenges along the border," Abbott said. "Texas taxpayers are having to step up so we as a state can protect our citizens."

State Sen. Jane Nelson, chair of the state Senate Finance Committee, said in the press conference that the \$250 million in state money — that Abbott referred to as a down payment — was being allocated as authorized under

emergency orders. She did not clarify where the public money came from originally, but in a letter released later by Abbott's office the governor said it would come from the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's budget.

The state also has set up a webpage and post office box so anyone can donate money for Abbott's wall. Large numbers of migrants have been showing up

at the U.S. border with Mexico, with many turning themselves over to U.S. Border Patrol agents in seeking legal asylum status. But the numbers of families and children traveling without their parents crossing into the U.S. have dropped sharply since March and April, while the encounters with single adults have remained high. Abbott, who is up for reelection next year and has hasn't ruled out a run for president in 2024, has taken increased action over immigration since Biden took office, including sending more state police and national guardsmen to the border to arrest people entering the country illegally or cartels trafficking illegal drugs. On Wednesday Abbott said jails are looking for additional bed space to house the rising number of people being arrested.

Abbott has also asked other states for help, and Wednesday, Florida's GOP governor, Gov. Ron DeSantis, heeded that call, announcing he would send law enforcement from his state to Texas and Arizona, where fellow Republican Doug Ducey has also requested help from other states. □

Hispanic group sues Santa Fe mayor over destroyed obelisk



In this Saturday, Oct. 12, 2020, file photo, demonstrators secure a rope around the centerpiece of a solid stone obelisk before tearing it down in Santa Fe, N.M.

Associated Press

By CEDAR ATTANASIO
Associated Press / Report for America

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — A New Mexico Hispanic fraternal order is suing the mayor of Santa Fe over

damage to a historical monument by activists last year and the city's proposal to permanently remove it. In a lawsuit filed Wednesday in state district court, the Union Protectoría de

Santa Fé argues that the 152-year-old stone obelisk is a legally protected historical site under state law and that its removal dishonors Hispanic veterans.

A group of around 40 mostly white activists tore down the stone obelisk last year after other statues and monuments across the U.S. were toppled over concerns about racism.

In Santa Fe, inscriptions at the base of the monument honored Union soldiers who died fighting Indigenous tribes and Confederate soldiers. One inscription that described Indigenous people as "savages" was chiseled out in 1974 and never repaired.

The lawsuit asks a judge to prevent the city from spending any time or mon-

ey on modifications to the historic downtown park until the stone obelisk is restored. That would hobble Mayor Alan Webber's plans to have the monument permanently removed and replaced with something that city officials deem more culturally inclusive. A proposal for a commission to take on that task is being considered by the city council next month, with an estimated budget of \$265,000.

The mayor's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the legal challenge.

In addition to being a 19th century war memorial, the obelisk is a marker of the land grant issued from Spanish colonial royalty to Hispanic families that con-

quered the area in the 1600s.

It's a reference point that anchors heritage and religious processions for traditional Hispanics and serves as a reminder of genocide for Native Americans.

"We're protecting our history, culture and our traditions, and our religion also," said Virgil Vigil, President of Union Protectoría de Santa Fé. For Vigil, a Vietnam War veteran and helicopter pilot, honoring the veterans is a major focus.

"This is respecting our soldiers that gave their lives to maintain the freedom that we have and to end slavery," he said in an interview Monday, near the grey wooden box that covers the remnants of the obelisk. □

Editors of Hong Kong newspaper arrested under security law

By ZEN SOO

Associated Press

HONG KONG (AP) — Hong Kong police used a sweeping national security law Thursday to arrest five editors and executives of a pro-democracy newspaper on charges of colluding with foreign powers — the first time the legislation has been used against the press in yet another sign of an intensifying crackdown by Chinese authorities in the city long known for its freedoms.

Police said they had evidence that more than 30 articles published by Apple Daily played a "crucial part" in what they called a conspiracy with foreign countries to impose sanctions against China and Hong Kong.

The newspaper said in a statement that the move left it "speechless" but vowed to continue its reporting and even invited other media outlets to watch the Friday editions roll off the presses, a show of its commitment to continue its work.

Apple Daily has long been one of the most outspoken defenders of Hong Kong's freedoms and in recent years has often criticized the Chinese and Hong Kong governments for walking back promises that the territory could re-



Ryan Law, second from right, Apple Daily's chief editor, is arrested by police officers in Hong Kong Thursday, June 17, 2021.

Associated Press

tain those freedoms for 50 years after the former British colony was handed over to China in 1997.

The newspaper has thus found itself a frequent target. Apple Daily founder Jimmy Lai is currently serving a 20-month prison sentence after being convicted of playing a role in unauthorized protests in 2019, when Hongkongers took the streets in massive antigovernment demonstrations in response to a proposed extradition law that would have allowed

suspects to stand trial in China. Protests grew to include calls for broader democratic freedoms, but the movement only appeared to harden Beijing's resolve to limit civil liberties in the territory, including by imposing the national security law used in Thursday's arrests.

The legislation outlaws secession, subversion, terrorism and foreign collusion and has been used to arrest over 100 pro-democracy figures since it was first implemented a year ago,

with many others fleeing abroad. The result is that it has virtually silenced opposition voices in the city — and drawn sanctions from the U.S. against Hong Kong and Chinese government officials.

Those arrested Thursday included Apple Daily's chief editor Ryan Law; the CEO of its publisher Next Digital, Cheung Kim-hung; the publisher's chief operating officer; and two other top editors, according to the newspaper.

Police also froze 18 million

Hong Kong dollars (\$2.3 million) in assets belonging to three companies linked to Apple Daily, said Li Kwai-wah, a senior superintendent at Hong Kong's National Security Department. Trading in shares of Next Digital was halted Thursday morning at the request of the company, according to filings with the Hong Kong stock exchange.

In an apparent show of force, more than 200 police officers were involved in the search of Apple Daily's offices, and the government said a warrant was obtained to look for evidence of a suspected violation of the national security law.

Apple Daily published a letter to its readers, saying that police had confiscated many items during the search, including 38 computers that contained "considerable" journalistic material.

"Today's Hong Kong feels unfamiliar and leaves us speechless. It feels as though we are powerless to stop the regime from exercising its power as it pleases," the letter read. "Nevertheless, the staff of Apple Daily is standing firm. We will continue to persist as Hongkongers and live up to the expectations so that we have no regrets to our readers and the times we are in." □

Germany's Stasi files agency wraps up work after 3 decades

BERLIN (AP) — An agency set up to oversee the voluminous files of communist East Germany's secret police, the Stasi, has wrapped up its work after nearly three decades.

The files on Thursday became the responsibility of Germany's Federal Archives, headquartered in the western city of Koblenz, which also took over the agency's roughly 1,300 employees. The files themselves are staying put at the sprawling former headquarters of the Ministry for State Security, or Stasi for short, in Berlin, and 13 other sites in eastern Germany.

The Stasi used a vast net-

work of agents and informers to collect details on East German citizens to quash dissent. It compiled a huge catalogue of material ranging from the banal to the fictitious, and also placed thousands of agents to spy on top Western officials.

Germany's parliament decided in November to wind up the files agency and transfer oversight to the Federal Archives. One argument for the change was a need to combine resources, with many files still needing to be restored and digitized. A new post of ombudsperson for victims of the East German dictatorship was set up,

and former opposition activist Evelyn Zupke was appointed to that job earlier this month. Roland Jahn, the last of three former East German pro-democracy activists who led the files agency, said he was satisfied with the change, telling news agency dpa that "with the handover of the files, they will become part of the memory of the nation." Predecessor Marianne Birthler has criticized the move, expressing concern that agency's educational and research activities will come to an end. Access to the files is unaffected by the change. So far, there have been some 7.3 million applications



In this May 24, 2011 picture, paper fragments are pictured at the Government's Institute for checking the former East German Intelligence papers in Berlin, Germany.

Associated Press

from people wanting to view files, from people on whom the Stasi compiled

records but also from authorities, academics, journalists and others. □

Lebanon workers stage general strike over escalating crises

By SARAH EL DEEB and FADI TAWIL

BEIRUT (AP) — Shops, government offices, businesses and banks shuttered their doors in Lebanon on Thursday, as part of a general strike to protest deteriorating economic conditions and press for a government to deal with the worsening political and economic crises.

The strike, which was accompanied by several roadblocks set up around Beirut and other cities, was ironically supported by the very political parties blamed for the months-long deadlock over forming a government. This drew criticism from many activists and commentators, who questioned why those who were driving the economic and financial meltdown were themselves on strike.

Lebanon has been without a fully functioning government since August. Prime Minister-designate Saad Hariri, named to the post in October, has failed to gain



A Lebanese army humvee passes next of burned tires that set on fire by protesters to block a main highway, during a protest against the increase in prices of consumer goods and the crash of the local currency, in Beirut, Lebanon, Thursday, June 17, 2021.

Associated Press

support from the presidency over his Cabinet picks — and the two sides have locked horns over who gets more say in shaping a government. The World Bank has described Lebanon's financial and economic

crisis as among the worst in the world in 150 years. The crisis, festering since 2019, has reached new heights in recent weeks. Fuel has been in short supply, power outages have increased, and medicine

— mostly imported — has been missing. Hospitals have closed their labs to outpatients and prices have soared and the value of wages dropped as the national currency, pegged to the dollar for 30 years, is in

free fall. On the black market, the Lebanese pound sells at nearly 10 times its official rate to the dollar.

The financial meltdown is threatening to undermine the national army, wiping out soldiers' salaries and putting unprecedented pressure on the military's operational abilities. France was holding a fundraiser virtual meeting on Thursday aimed at mobilizing aid, including food, medicine and medical equipment for the Lebanese army. Over 20 countries are expected to take part.

Protesters blocked Beirut's airport highway with trash bins, setting them on fire, and causing large clouds of black smoke to hang over the motorway. Banks and government offices were shut and several shops in central Beirut were also closed.

Critics ridiculed the ruling elite's attempt to rally behind the strike. A hashtag on Twitter called "the regime revolts" was trending on Thursday. □

U.N.: Over 270 migrants rescued and detained in Libya



In this June 15, 2021, photo released by the IOM, more than 270 migrants are returned by boat to the port of Tripoli in Libya after they were intercepted by the commercial vessel Vos Tritan a day previous.

Associated Press

By NOHA ELHENNAWY
CAIRO (AP) — Over 270 Europe-bound migrants were rescued by a commercial ship near Libya's Mediterranean shores and handed over to the Libyan coast guard who sent them to detention centers, the U.N. migration and refugee agencies said.

The migrants were rescued in international waters on Monday by the Vos Triton, sailing under the flag of Gibraltar, said the International Organization for Migration and the UNHCR in a joint statement Wednesday evening. A day later, they were returned by the Libyan coast

guard to the Tripoli port, from where they were taken into detention by Libyan authorities, the statement added.

"The two organizations reiterate that no one should be returned to Libya after being rescued at sea. Under international maritime law, rescued individuals should be disembarked at a place of safety," said the agencies, adding that Libya cannot be considered "a safe place."

The vessel's owners did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

For almost a decade, war-torn Libya has been the dominant transit point for migrants fleeing war and poverty in Africa and the Middle East and aspiring to settle in Europe. Smugglers often pack desperate families into ill-equipped rubber boats that stall and founder along the perilous central Mediterranean route.

In recent years, the EU

has partnered with Libya's coast guard and other local groups to stem such dangerous sea crossings. Rights groups, however, say those policies leave migrants at the mercy of either the sea or Libya's armed groups, with many ending up confined in squalid detention centers rife with abuses.

Rescue groups have also decried the handover of migrants to the Libyan authorities, accusing the merchant vessel of committing "illegal pushback" — a practice where migrants are denied the right to apply for international protection.

The German humanitarian group Sea-Watch tweeted that the migrants were eventually transferred against their will from the Vos Triton to a Libyan patrol boat.

On Monday, aid group Alarm Phone tweeted that it had received a dis-

tress call from 200 people aboard a wooden boat in international waters in the Central Mediterranean. The group said that their engine was broken and that attempts to contact the Libyan coast guard had failed. Passengers were eventually rescued by Vos Triton, added the group. So far this year, more than 13,000 migrants were returned to Libyan detention centers and hundreds have perished at sea, said both agencies.

"IOM and UNHCR call for an end to arbitrary detention in Libya through the establishment of a judicial review process, and advocate for alternatives to detention starting with the immediate release of the most vulnerable," read the statement. The U.N. agencies urged governments to grant merchant vessels rescuing people in distress "swift permission" for disembarkation in safe ports. □

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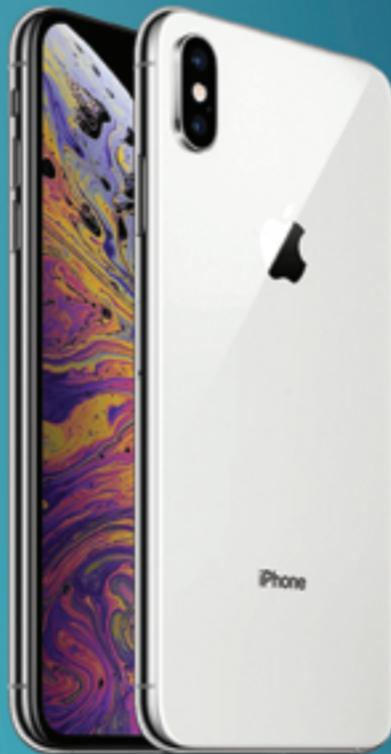
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Power outage hits 337K in Puerto Rico amid growing outrage

By DÁNICA COTO

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico (AP)

— A sudden power failure left more than 337,000 customers in the dark across Puerto Rico late Wednesday, enraging many who were recovering from a massive outage that hit the U.S. territory just days ago. Luma Energy, a private company that took over the island's power transmission and distribution system on June 1, said three units were knocked offline for reasons not immediately known. At first, the company said some 190,000 customers had been affected, but it later tweeted that power had been restored to more than 252,700 customers, leaving more 84,000 still without electricity.

Various spokeswomen did not return calls for comment.

The latest outage unleashed a flood of complaints on social media as

anger spread among thousands of people who were forced to throw out food and refrigerated medication including insulin in recent days. Some also complained about damaged appliances as lights flickered on and off since Thursday's outage that left 900,000 people in the dark. Wednesday's outage came just hours after Luma warned that services would be interrupted nightly for the next three days given pre-scheduled maintenance at one plant and interruptions in the generation of power run by Puerto Rico's Electric Power Authority. The most recent outage is not related to the upcoming interruptions in service, Luma said.

It's the latest challenge to hit a company that has come under scrutiny amid high expectations that it would briskly solve problems despite having to rely on aging infrastructure



In this Oct. 19, 2017 file photo, Puerto Rico Electric Power Authority workers repair distribution lines damaged by Hurricane Maria in the Cantera community of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

Associated Press

and a fragile power grid that has not been strengthened since Hurricane Maria razed it in 2017 as a Category 4 storm, leaving some customers without power for up to a year.

Victoria Pérez, who lives in the capital of San Juan, said power in her neighborhood of Río Piedras usually goes out two to three times

a week, but that outages have recently worsened. She and her family already had spent two days without electricity when Thursday's massive outage hit, adding that they have had to adjust their budget and buy gasoline to keep their generator going.

"These days it's been running like it's Maria all over

again," she said. "The entire neighborhood is noisy."

The outages have been so constant lately that several mayors have declared states of emergency and handed out generators and ice to those most in need, as well as hired private crews to restore power after saying that Luma informed them they lacked enough brigades.

Earlier Wednesday, Luma said it was still probing what caused a large fire at a main substation that led to Thursday's outage, adding that the investigation won't be finalized for another four to six weeks.

Luma is a consortium made up of Calgary, Alberta-based Atco and Quanta Services Inc. of Houston. It serves roughly 1.5 million customers as part of a 15-year contract with Puerto Rico's government, which remains the owner and operator of the island's power generators. □

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Restaurants

Start with a breakfast meal at Chill Out Island Café for a fluffy souffle pancake with your choice of toppings, breakfast sandwiches or acai bowls plus your favorite bubble tea. TGI Fridays offers breakfast options starting from \$8.57, available all day – every day. Go Argentinian style at Che Bar and try their delicious omelet with chorizo/ham, mozzarella, onions, peppers, and tomatoes served with skillet potatoes and toast.

These restaurants are also open for lunch and dinner and will delight you with unique tastes. Choices run from Argentinian dishes to, Asian/Caribbean, International and Mexican at amongst others Iguana Cantina. Sip and have a good time at the Bulldog Aruba located in the center of the Plaza. Open till 11pm.

VIP Cinema

Visit the one-of-a-kind Caribbean Cinemas VIP on the second floor of Paseo Herencia and enjoy your favorite movies with the latest projection and 7.1 Dolby surround sound with a delicious bag of popcorn.

Entertainment

Kids can enjoy the Paseo kids' activities, carousel & kiddie train, every day from 6pm to 10pm and do not forget to catch the nightly water shows at 7:30pm, 8:30pm and 9:30pm. Another fun activity is the The Range Airsoft Experience located behind The Lazy Turtle. Snap Instagramable pictures at the Angel Wings located between Pandora and Quiksilver and another one in front of TGI Fridays. Catch a live Show on Friday by violinist Angela Flores and Saturday by the acrobatic group Ritmo Cubano at 8pm on the Plaza Padu.

Also with any purchase at Paseo Herencia you will receive FREE parking in the parking garage. Paseo Herencia has implemented all COVID protocols according to the Aruba Health & Happiness code. It is required to wear face masks when shopping or visiting the mall to ensure a safe environment.

To learn more, visit the Paseo Herencia Facebook or Instagram page. [□](#)






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Mangroves cover 1.15 % of Aruba's territory**

ORANJESTAD — July 26 marks the International Day for the Conservation of the Mangrove Ecosystem, adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 2015 and celebrated each year on July 26. With this, UNESCO aims to raise awareness of the importance of mangrove ecosystems as 'a unique, special and vulnerable ecosystem' and to promote solutions for their sustainable management, conservation and uses.

Mangroves are rare, spectacular and prolific ecosystems on the boundary between land and sea. These extra ordinary ecosystems contribute to the wellbeing, food security, and protection of coastal communities worldwide. They support a rich biodiversity and provide a valuable nursery habitat for fish and crustaceans. Mangroves also act as a form of natural coastal defense against storm surges, tsunamis, rising sea levels and erosion. Their soils are highly effective carbon sinks, sequestering vast amounts of carbon.

Yet mangroves are disappearing three to five times faster than overall global forest losses, with serious ecological and socio-economic impacts. Current estimates indicate that mangrove coverage has been divided by two in the past 40 years.

DNM has calculated the area of mangrove coverage by making use of the

program ArcGIS which coordinates system Tranverse Mercator Aruba. The polygon (a geometric figure) is used to measure the total area covered by mangroves which resulted in the percentage of 1, 15. The project was a collaboration between DNM and the Department of Infrastructure and Planning (DIP). The areas of mangrove son Aruba are: Rincon, Daimari, Zeewijk, Rif Renaissance, Bucuti Aeropuerto, Parkietenbos, Rif Palm Island, Bubali Plas, Boca Grandi, Mangel Halto, Rif Mangel Halto, Barcadera, Saliña Cerca, Eagle Beach, Bubali Plas, Santo Largo, Baby Beach and Rif San Nicolas. Mangroves also are present in the areas of Parke National Aruba and Rooi Prikichi.

Aruba has four kinds of mangroves: the red mangrove, the black mangrove, the white mangrove or Shimaron and the Fofoti. All mangroves are protected by law as incorporated in our national decree for the protection of local flora and fauna (Landsbesluit bescherming inheemse flora en fauna – AB 2017 no 48). Also the plants are protected by international laws (Special Protected Areas and Wildlife or SPAW protocol). The recently official made protection of 16 nature areas on the island by law include the protection of our mangroves. □

Pictures by: Michael Arends



Leading CBD and Wellness Brands Launch in Aruba Top Regional Distributor of Wines and Spirits in the Atlantic Basin Expands into Fast-Growing CBD and Wellness Products

MIAMI, FLORIDA – The top names in cannabidiol (CBD) and wellness, including cbdMD, Marley™ CBD, and Secret Nature, will now be available for the first time in Aruba, and throughout other Caribbean and Central American markets thanks to WB Canna Co. & Wellness, one of the first new companies in the region focused on distribution of top-quality CBD and wellness products.

WB Canna Co. & Wellness is a wholly owned subsidiary of WEBB Banks, the leading premium wine and spirits distributor in the Caribbean and Central America, and travel retail in the Americas. The company launches with a comprehensive and diverse portfolio of leading cannabis and wellness brands, including:

- cbdMD, the largest CBD and wellness company in the industry, with a varied portfolio of CBD oil tinctures, gummies, sleep aids, and other products available in more than 30 countries across the globe. Publicly traded cbdMD also sponsors and supports numerous influencers and athletes who use and endorse their products, including pro golfer Bubba Watson, MMA fighter Daniel Cormier, top fuel drag racer Leah Pruett, and the NO-BULL CrossFit Games.
- Docklight Brands brings Bob Marley's belief in the positive potential of the herb to consumers worldwide through their Marley CBD portfolio, including infused teas, wellness shots, chocolates, and skincare products crafted with intention and respect. Additional brands in their portfolio include The Goodship® CBD confections, and Rommie's™ Bloody Mary



Jane - bloody Mary mix infused with CBD.

- Secret Nature, award-winning crafted premium organic CBD flowers, vapes, pre-rolls, and Rare Earth Medicine (REM) sleep capsules. Founded in 2017, Secret Nature products are all-natural lab-tested small batch CBD flowers and extracts.

Additional high-profile brands will be announced soon.

"Looking at the rapid growth of CBD and wellness brands, I've never before seen that level of consumer enthusiasm for new brands and categories. This is a big industry that will only continue to evolve, and we have the experience, market knowledge, and relationships to bring these products to market – not to mention, we're launching

with truly fantastic brands," says Andy Consuegra, CEO of Miami-based WEBB Banks and WB Canna Co. & Wellness. "We understand the importance of brand and category training and activations, and we know how to navigate complex compliance regulations in a constantly changing environment, so this expansion of our product portfolio was the ideal place for us to grow our business."

According to estimates from New Frontier Data, the quickly expanding CBD industry is expected to reach \$1.3 billion in sales next year, up from \$390 million in 2018. Estimates from BDS Analytics and Arcview suggest that CBD sales will reach more than \$20 billion by 2024.

Warehousing out of Miami, the new WB Canna Co. & Wellness division will launch its CBD portfolio in

Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Aruba, Jamaica, and Bermuda, as permitted by local law. Its broader wellness portfolio, which excludes CBD products, will launch in all Caribbean, Central American, and duty free markets. By the end of 2021, the company expects to open distribution of CBD products in all regulated markets in the region and travel retail.

WB Canna Co. & Wellness is led by Phillip Jarrell who has been with WEBB Banks for 10 years, and includes a team of dedicated sales managers with deep insight into the cannabis and wellness industries. Like parent company WEBB Banks, WB Canna Co. & Wellness employs staff on-the-ground in the territories they serve who have existing knowledge of the category and brands, as well as regional laws and regulations. This extensive local experience gives brands under the WB Canna Co. & Wellness portfolio confidence to enter these new markets and the opportunity to expand as more countries legalize use of these products.

"There's enormous opportunity for CBD and wellness products in our markets, especially as travel and tourism continues to come back," adds Jarrell. "We've assembled a powerful portfolio of recognized brands that meet many different consumer needs, from mood modulation to sleep, and relaxation to refreshment. With these brands, coupled with new products to come, we expect our CBD and wellness business will double within a year."

To learn more, visit www.wb-cannaco.com as well as @wb-cannaco on Instagram and @wbcannacoandwellness on Facebook. For sales and distribution inquiries, please contact info@wbcannaco.com.



Scotch whisky makers welcome suspension of costly U.S. tariffs

By PAN PYLAS

LONDON (AP) — Scotch single malt whisky makers breathed a sigh of relief Thursday after the United States agreed to suspend tariffs on one of Scotland's main exports following the resolution of a long-standing trade row between the U.S. and the EU over subsidies to aircraft companies Boeing and Airbus.

President Donald Trump imposed the 25% tariffs in October 2019 as part of the trade dispute over aerospace subsidies. While the U.K. no longer is an EU member, it belonged to the bloc when the tariffs were introduced.

Earlier this week, the U.S. and the EU reached an agreement to end their dispute, paving the way for a 5-year suspension of tariffs both sides had put on an array of products, including olive oil and cheese, as well as whisky.

The Scotch Whisky Association estimated that the tariffs contributed to a 30% fall in total exports to the U.S., equivalent to around 600 million pounds (\$850 million) in the 18 months to March 2021.

"This deal removes the threat of tariffs being reimposed on Scotch whisky next month and enables distillers to focus on recovering exports to our largest and most valuable export market," Karen Betts, the association's chief executive, said.

A thaw in U.S.-EU relations had been widely expected following the election of President Joe Biden, who



This Friday, Nov. 13, 2009, file photo, shows Scotch bottles in Cologne, Germany.

Associated Press

made clear his intention to improve ties. In March, both sides agreed to temporarily halt the tariffs linked to the Airbus-Boeing dispute in a bid to negotiate a solution. Following the U.S.-EU aerospace agreement, British International Trade Secretary Liz Truss and the U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai agreed to halt retaliatory tariffs for five years. "Today's deal draws a line under an incredibly damaging issue and means we can focus on taking our trading relationship with the U.S. to the next level, including working more closely to challenge unfair practices by nations like China and using the power

of free trade to build back better from the pandemic," Truss said.

Tai said the agreement, in which both sides also agreed to form a working group on the civil aviation industry and to co-operate against "non-market practices of third countries" can be built upon to "ensure fair competition and address common challenges from China and other non-market economies."

Following the U.K.'s departure from the EU's economic orbit at the start of this year, it is free to negotiate trade deals with whichever countries it wants. Earlier this week, the British government negotiated the

broad outlines of a free trade deal with Australia that will see tariffs on a wide range of goods eliminated over coming years. Ivan Menezes, the chief executive of drinks giant Diageo, said the elimination of tariffs on Scotch whisky and other recent developments illustrate the benefits that can accrue from Brexit.

"With the end of this dispute, a new free trade agreement with Australia that removes remaining tariffs on U.K. spirits and the opening of trade talks with India, the largest whisky market in the world, the U.K.'s newly independent trade policy is now bringing major benefits for Scotch and Scot-

land," said Menezes, whose company's stable of single malt whiskies includes Talisker and Laphroaig.

The Scottish National Party, which runs the devolved administration in Scotland, urged more support from the British government to help businesses that suffered.

"Whilst this announcement is very welcome after months of cross-party campaigning, the losses to Scotch whisky exports have been eye-watering, and it will take time for the industry to get back on its feet," lawmaker David Linden said.

Under Thursday's agreement, the U.K. will suspend for five years the 25% tariffs on U.S. rum, brandy and vodka. American whiskeys though will continue to face a 25% tariff in the U.K. imposed in connection with the steel and aluminum dispute between the EU and the U.S.

The Distilled Spirits Council of the United States welcomed Thursday's deal and hoped that a resolution can soon be found to lift the tariffs on American whiskeys, which it said have contributed to a 53% decline in exports to the U.K.

"We hope this positive momentum will also lead to the prompt and permanent removal of the EU and UK's tariffs on American Whiskeys," the group's CEO Chris Swonger said.

His counterpart in the Scotch Whisky Association, Karen Betts, said she hoped these "can also be resolved quickly." □

Lordstown Motors reverses, says it has no firm truck orders

TOLEDO, Ohio (AP) — Struggling electric truck maker Lordstown Motors said Thursday it doesn't have any firm orders for its vehicles, just days after its president said the company had enough to maintain production through 2022. Questions have been mounting about whether Lordstown Motors has

enough money to stay in business and about its previous claims that it already had presold 100,000 of its Endurance pickup trucks. Lordstown CEO Steve Burns and Chief Financial Officer Julio Rodriguez resigned on Monday, the same day the company acknowledged one potential buyer that committed to a large num-

ber of preorders doesn't appear to have the resources to complete that transaction, and other preorders appear too vague or weak to be relied on for purchases. A day later, company President Rich Schmidt said during a meeting of the Automotive Press Association of Detroit that Lordstown was on track to begin mak-



This Thursday, June 25, 2020, file photo shows the electric Endurance pickup at Lordstown Motors Corp., in Lordstown, Ohio.

Associated Press

ing the Endurance in the fall and had enough bind-

ing orders to keep going through 2022. □

CROSSWORD

By **THOMAS JOSEPH**

- ACROSS**
 40 Hospital
 1 Goes for worker
 6 Rho follower
 42 Eat away
 43 Dickens' Edwin
 11 Left, on liners
 44 Transmits
 12 Flynn of film
 45 Bright

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Yesterday's answer

- DOWN**
 1 Scottish poles for tossing
 2 Bare one's soul
 3 Tool for joining
 4 Numerical prefix
 5 Traveling trunk
 6 Rat's home
 7 Steamed state
 8 Tool for breaching
 9 Accelerate
 10 Tips off
 17 Winter melons
 23 Scrollwork shape
 24 As done by
 26 Gofer's work
 27 Wild cards, sometimes
 28 Disregard
 30 "The Place" actor
 31 Swift
 33 Writer Verne
 39 Find a sum
 41 Braz. neighbor

- 13 Contradict
 14 Zigzag
 15 Complete
 16 Serving feat
 18 Pricing word
 19 Wish undone
 20 Ruin
 21 Place
 22 Benders
 24 Heidi's home
 25 Tel Aviv native
 27 Jumbles of noise
 29 Cattle marks
 32 Easter quest
 33 Pickle purchase
 34 Opening
 35 Numerical prefix
 36 Can. neighbor
 37 Suffix for hero
 38 Pink shade

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42						43			
44						45			

A X Y D L B A A X R
 is L O N G F E L L O W

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

6-18

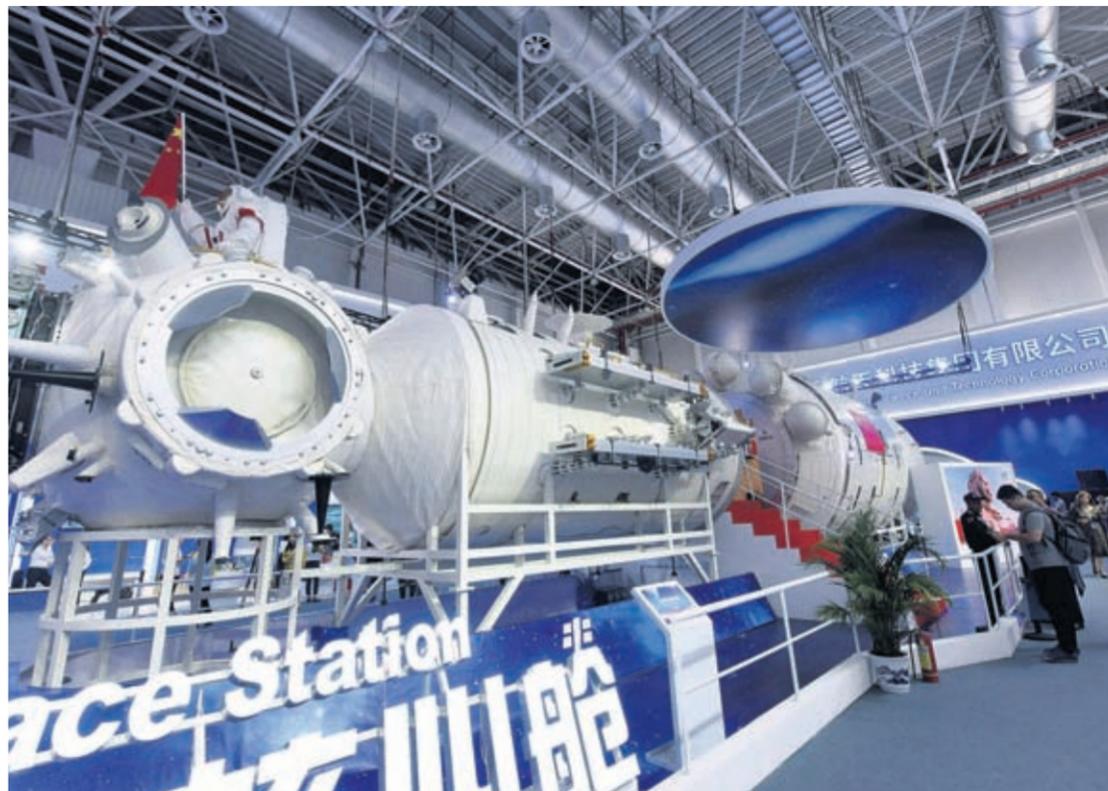
CRYPTOQUOTE

V S U V N O S Z O M Y D W O N Z V M A

Y N V L F Y V M W X L U Q S S U V N V M A

V Y Q L D W I G P Y V D M - D U Q M

V N I Z. — Z V Y Q X O X Q W Q W D N D
Yesterday's Cryptoquote: HOPE IS LIKE PEACE. IT IS NOT A GIFT FROM GOD. IT IS A GIFT ONLY WE CAN GIVE ONE ANOTHER. — ELIE WIESEL



In this Nov. 7, 2018, photo, visitors look at a life-size model of the Tianhe core module of China's next space station at the Airshow China in Zhuhai in southern China's Guangdong Province. Associated Press

EXPLAINER: The significance of China's new space station

By **SAM McNEIL** Associated Press

JIUQUAN, China (AP) — Adding a crew to China's new orbiting space station is another major advance for the burgeoning space power.

Here's a look at key developments:

WHAT'S THE MISSION'S PURPOSE?

The three-member crew is due to stay for three months in the station's main living module, named Tianhe, or Heavenly Harmony. They will be carrying out science experiments and maintenance, space walks and preparing the facility to receive two additional modules next year.

While China concedes it arrived late at the space station game, it says its facility is cutting-edge. It could also outlast the International Space Station, which is nearing the end of its functional lifespan.

The launch Thursday also revives China's crewed space program after a five-year hiatus. With Thursday's launch, China has now sent 14 astronauts into space since it first achieved the feat in 2003, becoming the third country after the former Soviet Union and the U.S. to do so.

WHY IS CHINA BUILDING

THE STATION?

As the Chinese economy was beginning to gather steam in the early 1990s, China formulated a plan for space exploration, which it has carried out at a steady, cautious cadence. While China has been barred from participation in the International Space Station, mainly over U.S. objections to the Chinese program's secretive nature and close military connections, it's likely the country would have built its own station anyway as it sought the status of a great space power.

At a news conference Wednesday, China Manned Space Agency Assistant Director Ji Qiming told reporters at the Jiuquan launch center that the construction and operation of the space station will raise China's technologies and "accumulate experience for all the people."

The space program is part of an overall drive to put China on track for even more ambitious missions and provide opportunities for cooperation with Russia and other, mostly European, countries along with the United Nations Office for Outer Space Affairs.

China's space program has been a massive source of national pride, embodying its rise from poverty to the world's second-largest economy over the past four decades. That has helped shore up the power of the Communist Party, whose authoritarian rule and strict limits on political activity have been tolerated by most Chinese as long as the economy is growing. President and head of the party Xi Jinping has associated himself closely with that success, and Ji in his remarks cited Xi as setting the updated agenda for China's rise to prominence in space. The first mission to the station also coincides with the celebration of the party centenary next month, an important political milestone.

At the same time, China is modernizing its military at a rapid pace, raising concerns from neighbors, the U.S. and its NATO allies. While China espouses the peaceful development of space on the basis of equality and mutual respect, many recall that China in January 2007 sent a ballistic missile into space to destroy an inactive weather satellite, creating a debris field that continues to be a threat. □

Brief, global internet outages blamed on software bug



In this Oct. 9, 2019, file photo, flags are raised outside the Hong Kong Exchange Square building in Central of Hong Kong.

By **FRANK BAJAK**

BOSTON (AP) — A software bug at a major network provider briefly knocked dozens of financial institutions, airlines and other companies across the globe offline during peak business hours in Asia.

Akamai, which runs one of the internet's main content-delivery systems, said the outage Thursday was not caused by a cyberattack, but rather a software bug on a service that protects customers against denial-of-service attacks.

Many of the 500 affected Akamai customers had their traffic rerouted in minutes but it took more than four hours to fully restore the system, the Massachusetts company said. Akamai operates mirrors of customer websites in 135 countries — known as edge servers — designed to speed access to them.

The Hong Kong Stock Exchange and the four largest U.S. airlines were among those impacted. Akamai does not name its customers but says they include more than 300 of the

world's banks, more than 30 airlines, more than 200 national government agencies and 825 retailers.

Many of the outages were reported by people in Australia trying to do banking, book flights and access postal services at mid-afternoon. Many services were back up and running after an hour or so.

Banking services were severely disrupted, with Westpac, the Commonwealth, ANZ and St George all down, along with the website of the Reserve Bank of Australia, the country's central bank. The Reserve Bank cancelled a bond-buying operation due to technical

difficulties facing several banks that were to participate.

The airline Virgin Australia was also affected and cited the Akamai content delivery system. It said flights largely operated as scheduled after it restored access to its website and guest contact center.

Outages briefly spiked on American, Delta, United and Southwest airlines. Because the disruptions happened late at night in the U.S. when few planes were taking off, airline representatives said there was little to no effect on flights.

Southwest, which has suffered two other, unrelat-

ed technology issues this week, said its website and other internet-based tools were briefly disconnected but flights were not affected. United said there were no lingering issues early Thursday.

The disruptions occurred only days after many of the world's top websites went offline briefly due to a software disruption at Fastly, another major web services company. The company blamed the problem on a software bug triggered when a single customer changed a setting. □

Associated Press



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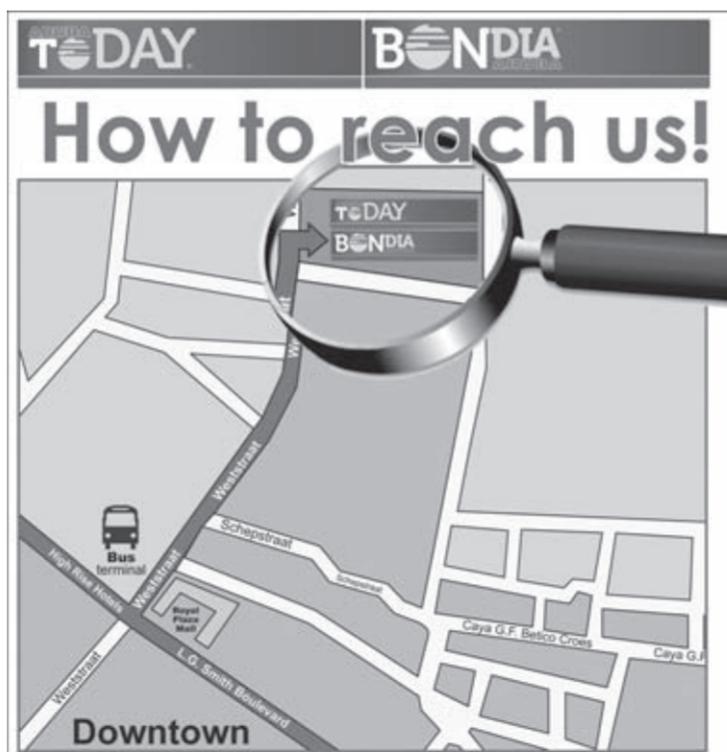
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Kevin Hart shows range in tearjerker 'Fatherhood'

By **LINDSEY BAHR**

Kevin Hart can make us laugh and cry, it seems, even if the vehicle was practically engineered to bring on the waterworks. In "Fatherhood," on Netflix on Friday, he plays a new dad whose wife dies shortly after childbirth and he's left raising their daughter on his own.

To be fair, there's been many built-in tearjerkers that have failed (remember "Life Itself"?). But something has to go very, very wrong for a film to mess up that kind of premise. "Fatherhood" doesn't just succeed on that emotional level, though — it's also a cut about the rest, thanks to a smart and funny and basically authentic script (director Paul Weitz and Dana Stevens) and Hart's inspired casting.

The story is based on Matthew Logelin's memoir, "Two Kisses for Maddy: A Memoir of Loss and Love," about losing his wife after she gave birth to their daughter. Since its publication 10 years ago, it's had a few different lives, first as a Lifetime movie, then as a Channing Tatum vehicle, before finally landing Weitz ("About a Boy") as a direc-



This image released by Netflix shows Kevin Hart in a scene from "Fatherhood."

Associated Press

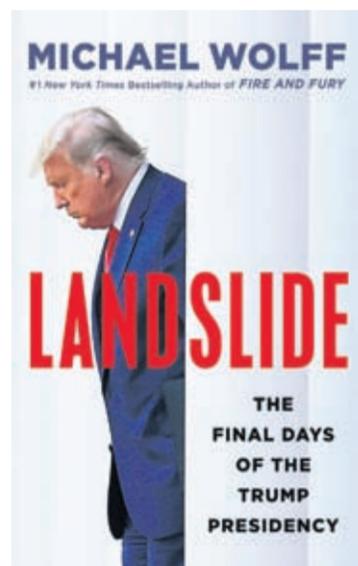
tor and Hart as his star. Hart plays Matt, a Boston professional with a beautiful wife. The film introduces him at her funeral, before cutting back to how it happened. The script does a good job at introducing you to Matt and Liz (Deborah Ayorinde) and making her more than just a bland stand-in for "wife" while you brace for what's coming. And of course, it's not about them but Matt and his baby daughter, Maddy. He doesn't even have time

to grieve. He's got a little human to keep alive. "Fatherhood" smooths out many of the edges of real life. Money does not seem to be a worry for Matt, he has parents and in-laws (Alfre Woodard is terrific as his mother-in-law) who are more than willing to take him and Maddy back to Minnesota, and his early parenting trials are all presented in palatable, bite-sized doses. One day is screams a lot. There's even

a "babies are hard but funny" montage set to Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It," where we breeze through installing a car seat and almost leaving it (with a baby inside) at the grocery store. This is not a "Tully"-style representation of the deep exhaustion of caring for an infant. The film does a good job balancing the drama with the comedy however, and is helped by a strong supporting cast, including Lil Rel Howery and Anthony Carrigan as Matt's best

friends. And within the sitcom dramedy aesthetic, there are moments of truth and grace, from Matt panic-vacuuming to simulate white noise so the colicky baby can sleep to him pleading with his mother-in-law that he'll never know if he's a good parent if he doesn't get the chance to try. It's never entirely clear why he doesn't want their help or needs to move back to their hometown. "Fatherhood" skips forward to kindergarten, which is a little jarring, but it's nice to see Maddy (Melody Hurd) with a personality and point of view and to give Hart someone other than a baby to connect with. It also allows the film to introduce a love interest (played by DeWanda Wise). You may never be surprised by where "Fatherhood" is going, but you forgive it, too. It's all done with a good heart. Even the cliché moments are understandable. Sometimes brutal realism is overrated when it comes to newborns in movies. And, let's be honest, you're much more likely to re-watch "Fatherhood" than "Tully." □

'Fire and Fury' author writes new Trump book 'Landslide'



This cover image released by Holt shows "Landslide: The Final Days of the Trump Presidency" by Michael Wolff.

Associated Press

By **HILLEL ITALIE**
AP National Writer

NEW YORK (AP) — The au-

thor of "Fire and Fury," the million-seller from 2018 that helped launched the wave of inside accounts of the Trump White House, will have a last take coming out next month. Michael Wolff's "Landslide: The Final Days of the Trump Presidency" is scheduled for July 27, publisher Henry Holt told The Associated Press on Thursday. Trump, who condemned "Fire and Fury" and attempted to have its publication halted, is among those who spoke to Wolff for his new book, according to Holt. "In 'Landslide,' Wolff closes the story of Trump's four years in office and his tumultuous last months at the helm of the country," the publisher announced, "based on Wolff's extraordi-

nary access to White House aides and to the former President himself, yielding a wealth of new information and insights about what really happened inside the highest office in the land, and the world." Wolff's first book on Trump, published in January 2018, was an immediate sensation and went on to sell more than 2 million copies. Critics questioned details of Wolff's reporting, but his underlying narrative of a chaotic White House and a volatile, easily distracted chief executive has held through numerous bestsellers which followed, from Bob Woodward's "Fear" to John Bolton's "The Room Where It Happened." Trump would deny Wolff's claims that he permitted

him access to the White House and tweeted in 2018 that "Fire and Fury" was "full of lies, misrepresentations and sources that don't exist." A Trump lawyer sent the publisher a cease and desist letter and threatened to sue for libel, a response which helped raise interest in "Fire and Fury." (Wolff had far fewer sales, and less access, with the 2019 book "Siege: Trump Under Fire"). Other books on the Trump administration's final days are in the works, including one by Woodward and Washington Post colleague Robert Costa. Politico and Vanity Fair have been among those reporting that Trump agreed to meet with Wolff and others writing about him, including Maggie Haberman of The New

York Times and Jon Karl of ABC News. A memoir by Trump remains uncertain. He issued a statement last week saying he was "writing like crazy" and claimed, to much skepticism among publishers, that he had turned down two offers. Publishing executives had expressed hesitancy about Trump even before the Jan. 6 siege of the U.S. Capitol by Trump supporters and became even warier after. Simon & Schuster CEO Jonathan Karp told employees at a company town hall last month that he wasn't interested in a Trump book because he doubted the former president, who has continued to falsely claim he won, would offer an honest account. □

Sixers' Ben Simmons making NBA history with free-throw woes

By **TIM REYNOLDS**
AP Basketball Writer

Ben Simmons' foul-shooting woes so far in the playoffs aren't just obvious. They're basically unprecedented.

The Philadelphia guard is 22 for 67 from the line so far in this postseason. He's down to 32.8% after going 4-for-14 in Philadelphia's Game 5 loss to Atlanta in the Eastern Conference semifinals on Wednesday night — and nobody in NBA playoff history, with that many attempts in single postseason, has ever been worse. The next lowest percentage, among those with at least 67 foul shots in a postseason, is Shaquille O'Neal's 37.4% for Miami in 2006 — when the Heat wound up winning the NBA championship anyway.

"Obviously, I've got to knock down free throws," Simmons said. "I've got to step up and do that."

Game 6 of the series is Friday in Atlanta, with the top-seeded 76ers now in a win-or-go-home scenario since they trail the best-of-seven 3-2.

There have been, entering Thursday, 804 other instances in NBA history of a player taking at least 67 free throws in a single postsea-



Atlanta Hawks' Trae Young, right, watches as Philadelphia 76ers' Ben Simmons attempts a free-throw during the first half of Game 5 in a second-round NBA basketball playoff series, Wednesday, June 16, 2021, in Philadelphia.

Associated Press

son. Of those, someone has finished below 50% only 23 times, below than 40% only five other times — three by Wilt Chamberlain, two by O'Neal.

Chamberlain and O'Neal are all-time greats, and another Hall of Famer — Ben Wallace, part of the 2021 class — would have been

worse if he took 67 free throws in the 2006 playoffs. He was 18 for 66 that spring, just 27.3%.

Otherwise, Simmons stands alone right now when it comes to foul-line futility.

Simmons's 10 misses from the line in Game 5 were the most by any player in any NBA game this season. In

Philadelphia's three losses to Atlanta in this series, he's a combined 8 for 29 from the foul line. The 76ers have lost those games by a total of 10 points.

76ers coach Doc Rivers has even had to take Simmons out late in some games, including Game 5, because the likelihood of him get-

ting intentionally sent to the line and missing free throws is just too risky.

"When Ben makes them, we get to keep him in," Rivers said. "When he doesn't, we can't. And that's just the way it is."

Simmons has missed 45 free throws in 10 playoff games. That's more than three total teams have missed in their first 10 games of this postseason; Atlanta missed 35, Phoenix missed 29 and Brooklyn missed 22. The Los Angeles Clippers have missed 46, as a team, through 12 games.

Simmons, the No. 1 overall pick in the 2016 draft, has never been an exceptional foul shooter; he's always been between 56% and 62% in each of his pro seasons. And it wasn't a big issue in the first half of this season, when he was shooting 67% at the All-Star break. February matched the best free-throw-shooting month of his career with him going 45 of 64, a 70% clip.

But he shot 53% after the break and has seen the numbers continue to plummet in the playoffs. He's not sure why, either.

"No idea about any of that," Simmons said. "It's on me." □

'Listening to my body': Nadal to sit out Wimbledon, Olympics

MADRID (AP) — Rafael Nadal will sit out Wimbledon and the Tokyo Olympics to rest and recover "after listening to my body," he announced via social media on Thursday, taking one of the biggest stars of tennis out of two of the sport's biggest events in 2021.

"The goal is to prolong my career and continue to do what makes me happy," the 35-year-old Spaniard said.

He lost to Novak Djokovic in four grueling sets that lasted more than four hours in the semifinals of the French Open last week — just the third loss for Nadal in 108 career matches at Roland Garros, where he has won a record 13 championships. That defeat ended Nadal's

35-match winning streak at the clay-court major tournament and his bid for a fifth consecutive title there. Nadal is tied with Roger Federer for the most Grand Slam titles won by a man with 20; Djokovic went on to win the French Open on Sunday for his 19th major. Nadal's Slam total includes two trophies at Wimbledon, in 2008 and 2010. He also owns two Olympic gold medals, in singles at the 2008 Beijing Games and in doubles with Marc Lopez at the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Games, where Nadal was Spain's flag bearer at the opening ceremony.

In 2012, Nadal pulled out of the London Olympics and the U.S. Open because of knee tendinitis.

Wimbledon's main draw

begins on June 28, and the Olympic tennis competition opens on July 24.

Nadal said having only two weeks between the end of the French Open and the start of Wimbledon this year — normally there are three, but play in Paris was delayed a week because of COVID-19 concerns — "didn't make it easier" for him to recover from "the always demanding" clay-court season.

After the loss to Djokovic at Roland Garros, Nadal pointed to fatigue as an issue for him in the later stages of that match.

On Thursday, he explained in one of a series of tweets that avoiding "any kind of excess" wear and tear on his body "is a very important factor at this stage of



Spain's Rafael Nadal waves to the crowd after losing to Serbia's Novak Djokovic in their semifinal match of the French Open tennis tournament at the Roland Garros stadium Friday, June 11, 2021 in Paris.

Associated Press

my career in order to try to keep fighting for the highest level of competition and titles."

A former No. 1-ranked

player who currently is No. 3, Nadal is 23-4 with two titles this season in Barcelona and Rome, both on clay courts. □

Richardson stands out on track with long nails, fast times

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — Those long, colorful fingernails might remind track fans of Flo-Jo. Now, Sha'Carri Richardson wants to flash speed that conjures images of the late, great American sprinter, as well.

The 21-year-old Richardson enters as the favorite in the 100 meters at U.S. Olympic track and field trials this week, where a win would put her on a list of American champions that includes world-record holder Florence Griffith Joyner.

"Flo-Jo came to the track and knew she was going to dominate," said Richardson, whose event starts Friday with the final Saturday. "The way she did that was graceful. I always liked that. If the amazing Flo-Jo had long nails, there was no excuse why I couldn't have long nails."

Richardson's race may not be a nail-biter. Others may. This first weekend also features the men's 100 meters, where Noah Lyles — one of the biggest names in the leadup to the Tokyo Games — kicks off his bid on a potential sprint double. There will be world-record attempts (keep an eye on the men's shot put) and 400-meter sprinter Allyson Felix trying to make her fifth Olympic team.

It all starts with two finals Friday — the men's shot put and 10,000 meters.

The show stopper could be Richardson. She's also big on hair color — a la two-time Olympic champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce of Jamaica — and names the styles of her hair. Red is "Sasha" and blonde is "La-Nay" (Richardson's middle name).

Her plans for trials: top secret.

As for her nails, well, those are actually inspired by her grandmother. It was only later that she discovered Griffith Joyner's nails in a fortuitous accident.

She was learning all about the history of Wilma Rudolph, the 100- and 200-meter Olympic champion in 1960, when she saw a picture of Griffith Joyner. Richardson counts both as inspirations.



Sha'Carri Richardson, center, wins the women's 100-meter dash final race during the USATF Golden Games athletics meet at Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, Calif., in this Sunday, May 9, 2021, file photo.

Associated Press

"Those two were the mix of the athlete I wanted to be," she said. "An athlete that shows I know where I came from and been through things, but I'm not going to allow that to define me, and to always present myself in a way that is dominant — but that is also appealing."

Richardson's times have been eye-opening — 10.77 or faster on three occasions this season. The only one who's been speedier this season is Fraser-Pryce. The time they're all chasing is 10.49, the mark Griffith Joyner set in 1988.

"That (time) is in my mind. But it's in the back of my mind," said Richardson, who will be running with a heavy heart after recently losing her mother. "Right now, my mindset is to perfect the craft. I know the times will follow."

THE 100 LOW-DOWN

Lyles is the big name and one of the featured athletes in NBC promos leading up to the Olympics. His bid for a 100-200 double starts Saturday.

It won't be an easy endeavor in the 100 with Trayvon Bromell, Marvin Bracy, Isaiah Young and Ronnie Baker all running fast. There's also Fred Kerley, who dropped the 400 to concentrate on the 100 and 200. Don't forget about Justin Gatlin, either. The 39-year-old won the 100-meter Olympic title in 2004. Gatlin also earned silver in Rio in the 100 and bronze at the 2012 London Games.

SHOT AT WORLD RECORD

Crouser broke the world indoor mark with his performance at an American Track League meet in January when his shot put traveled 22.82 meters (74 feet, 10½ inches).

His mark of 23.01 meters (75-6) in May is inching toward the outdoor record of 23.12 (75-10¼) set by Randy Barnes in 1990. Kovacs set his career-best outdoor mark of 22.91 (75-2) in 2019 while winning at worlds. He eclipsed Crouser's mark of 22.90 (75' 1¼).

FELIX & THE 400

The 35-year-old Felix will try to make the team in the 400. She's already earned six Olympic gold medals and three of the silver variety. The mother of a young daughter, Felix has found her voice away from the

track on issues such as lobbying for more protections in contracts for female athletes who give birth. The final is Sunday.

BIG HURDLES

Kenji Harrison enters the 100 hurdles as the favorite — and highly motivated. She finished a disappointing sixth at the 2016 trials, only to set a new world record a few weeks later.

The trio that made the 100 hurdles squad for Rio — Brianna Rollins, Nia Ali and Kristi Castlin — swept the Olympic medals. Rollins — now Brianna McNeal — was recently banned five years in a doping case but the Court of Arbitration for Sport made an interim decision to freeze her ban so she can run trials (she's listed among the entries). □



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